



STATEMENT OF WITNESS

Statement of Witness: Michelle [REDACTED] Age: Over 18 years

This statement, consisting of 7 page(s) signed by me is true to the best of my knowledge and belief. I know that this statement may be accepted in evidence in the Coroner's Court of South Australia and that if it contains material which is false or misleading in a material particular and which I know to be false and misleading I will be guilty of an offence.

Dated the 8th day of APRIL 20 15

Signature: M [REDACTED]

Witnessed by: SCOTT [REDACTED] (name)

of C/- SARAH [REDACTED] (address)

Signature of Witness: [REDACTED]

Relative to the death of:

Jacob [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

I provided this statement to Detective Senior Constable First Class DAVIES ID no. [REDACTED] on Wednesday the 18th of March 2015.

I am the mother of Jacob L [REDACTED]. He passed away on Thursday the 14th of February 2013. I have been asked to provide a statement in relation to how Jacob's death has affected me.

Signed: M [REDACTED]

Signature Witnessed by: [REDACTED]

South Australia Police
STATEMENT OF WITNESS

PD166

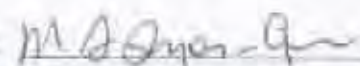
Continuation of Statement of: **Michelle** [REDACTED]

Life with Jake was anything but ordinary or normal. We had the funniest and the saddest moments possible. The last few years of Jake's life were not easy. He went on a journey that took him to some dark places with consequences that on occasions almost and eventually took his life. He had an addiction. An addiction that was fuelled and enabled by many demons. One of which was the internet, Silk Road. What he (like many other people with addiction) did not understand and he refused to acknowledge is that he took me with him on this journey. It was a journey that I did not ask to go on. It was a journey that we worked together to end many times but without success. On the 14th February 2013 Jake started me on a new journey. One that did not ask to go on nor do I want to be part of.

Now I am left with a life sentence for a crime that I did not commit. Grief. I am left to spend the rest of my life wondering. Wondering why he started. Wondering why he could not stop. Wondering what pain or trauma was he trying to forget. Is it my fault? Was I a bad parent? Where did I go wrong? Did I do enough to help him? Did I do enough to stop him? Why wouldn't he listen to me? Why do I have to go through this? What did I do to deserve this? Why has this happened? Why me? Why Jake? Why me? Why Jake? It seems I am condemned to life of endless questions that I will never get answers for.


Shame and guilt. Telling people about Jake's journey and how he died is a conversation killer. People do not know how to respond. They just do not know what to say. Instead they judge. They judge me as a person and they judge me as a parent. "Oh well, she must be a druggie too". "Well he was from a single parent family and we all know what that means". No one has said this to me but I know people are talking and will continue

Signed:



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Continuation of Statement of: **Michelle** [REDACTED]

to talk. It feels like society does not care. People who die from a drug related death are not reported on the news but it is a tragedy, and yet a story people do not want to hear. People do not want to hear that everyday someone lost their precious daughter or their loving son. All over the world is the sound of hearts breaking and yet nobody can hear it. A heart like mine. There is no organisation that swoops in on your family and offers support like it would if your child died of cancer. People offer their condolences, send you flowers and then promptly get on with their lives. I am left standing. Feeling very alone wondering how do I get on with mine. How do I pick up the pieces of my shattered heart and live a long and happy life? What does happiness mean now? It is something that I struggle to redefine.

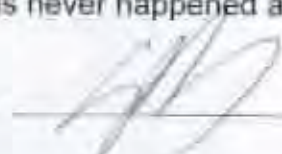
Although Jake passed away just over two years ago, my grieving started a long time ago. I had to learn to live with the fact that Jake would not grow up to be the man I thought he should be and had the potential to be. Living with a loved one who's life is spiralling downward at a fast pace is an incredibly difficult journey to be part, particularly when you feel like a bystander. Someone watching. Trying to reach out and doing everything you can yet feeling like a bystander. The approach I took to protect myself from the emotional pain was to manage. Manage his behaviour. Put in boundaries. Stop enabling. This resulted in me asking him to move out of home all the while knowing he had nowhere to go. The feelings of anxiety and guilt and are indescribable. This went against my belief that my job as a mother was to protect and provide a good home. There were times I did not hear from him for days or weeks and then it would get to a point where I had to know, so I would go looking for him. The fear that he had turned to crime and was living on the street made me feel sick. Physically sick. Endless days of nausea. Waiting for the knock on the door. Fortunately, this never happened and the

Signed:



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Continuation of Statement of: **Michelle** [REDACTED]

boundaries and rules that I put in place meant that home was a safe place for Jake. And when he needed a break, when he needed time out – he came home. When he asked to move home, for what would be his last few weeks, I said yes, but the boundaries and rules remained. He came home for help. One more try to get this monkey off his back,

I decided that I would never give up on Jake. Statistics tell me that I should have. Cut your ties, count your losses and keep yourself safe. But if I gave up, then who would believe in him, who would believe that he would get through this, who would be there for him when he was ready? The to-ing and fro-ing in my head resulted in days when I could not work because the anxiety got the better of me. Over time I realised it had to be me. I was the one that had to be strong and I vowed to do everything I could to help him. Enjoy the good times and manage the bad. I set a benchmark myself – could I stand up at Jake's funeral and feel confident that I had done everything I could to help him. Not once believing this would become the reality.

Forgetting and remembering. I loved Jake through the good times and bad and I do not want to forget any of that. Grief has had a huge impact on my memory. And yet I cannot forget what it felt like when I found him the night he died. I cannot forget how it felt to ring my sister, ask my neighbours for help, to face my family and Jake's friends. I cannot forget the level of heightened anxiety when I see people for the first time since he passed. Do they know, do they not know, what will I say if they ask me? At the moment I seem to remember more of the bad than the good. I hope my memory recovers and the good comes back.

Signed: 

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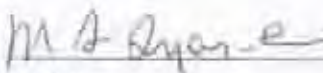
Continuation of Statement of: **Michelle** [REDACTED]

Jake was my family. I lost my family in one night. I have not had the opportunity to have more children and I did not mind because I felt complete. I had my family. I had my Jake. Now I feel incredibly incomplete. When I die that is the end of me. There is no part of me left in the world. When I grow old, who will go with me to doctors' appointments? Who will visit me in the nursing home? I am most hurt knowing that I will not have grandchildren, a part of my life I was most looking forward to. The truth is that in the last few years of Jake's life, he caused me so much pain and suffering. Now, I would give anything to have that back. I would give anything for him to walk through that door. I would give anything to not know where he is and if he is ok. I would do anything to be sitting in the hospital's intensive care unit again waiting for him to wake up from an overdose. Anything. It was hard. A very difficult time, yet easy compared to this. This grief.

Losing Jake has also affected my wider family. My sisters lost me (to grief) for a while and still do some days, as I just cannot love and support them the way I used to. My parents lost their first grandson. They played a major role in raising Jake and they were very close. Jake's passing is something they may never fully understand as addiction is not discussed by their generation, nor do they understand the power of the internet. My father initially suffered from heart failure and a mild heart attack following Jake's death which resulted in a couple of weeks in hospital each time. Both Mum and Dad now suffer from sleepless nights that they cannot explain and overall their general health has suffered. I can explain. It is called grief.

Both of my sisters have suffered from the anxious moments that I have experienced, what will I say? How do I say it? They too have had to take days off work when the grief

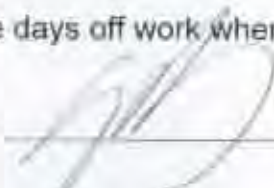
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Continuation of Statement of: **Michelle [REDACTED]**

has become too much. I have a young nephew and niece. They have had their world turned upside down. Their cousin, who they loved dearly, has gone from their lives. Their mum, my sister, has had to have conversations with them that no parent should have to. She has had to have discussions about suicide (as this is what people think when young people die suddenly), drug addiction and then finally the truth. My nephew and niece are at a loss to explain to their friends why they did not come to school, they struggle to explain who the person in the photos is. They have suffered multiple unexplained emotional outbursts, separation anxiety and sleepless nights. But most of all they just miss hanging out with Jake, playing Xbox, watching movies and we all miss his sideways hugs. Grief has invaded my whole family and taken so much.

Grief is like roller coaster. I do not know what is around the corner. I do not know what is over the next rise and I cannot get off, I am trapped. What I do know is that grief hits you from nowhere. There you are busily getting on with what your life and then bang. It's a smell, a song, a t-shirt, a colour, an expression, a person, a memory. It comes out of nowhere and leaves you flat for a moment, a day or maybe a week. People think that the anniversary or a birthday of someone who has passed is a day. The reality is for me is that it lasts for weeks. The anxiety slowly builds up. What will I do? How will I feel? Who do I want to be with? Can I go to work today? The day comes and it is gut wrenching. Shattering. A day to think about what I have lost. Those thoughts are there every day. It is on these days I cannot put it in a box and close the lid. Once the lid has been opened, I have no choice but to deal with it, usually this means for weeks at a time. Grief fills my head. I cannot work. I cannot socialise. I can only breathe and sleep. It becomes my life.

Signed: M. [Signature]

Reviewed: 14/01/2015

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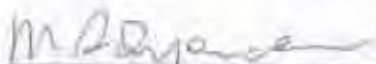
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Continuation of Statement of: **Michelle** [REDACTED]

I was often fearful that a stranger would knock on my door seeking money that Jake owed or looking for drugs. I was at times fearful for my safety. As it turns out, I should have been more fearful of the internet. The internet makes it too easy. Silk Road made buying and selling drugs safe. Buying drugs over the internet eliminated the risk of threat. The risk of being robbed or physically hurt. It eliminated the risk of meeting a stranger in a dark alley. All things Jake was fearful of. In fact, Silk Road meant that Jake did not even have to leave the comfort of his home. My home. The home I had created as a safe place. Drugs are not tolerated. I find, I flush. Not in my house. This behaviour is not acceptable. Then Silk Road walked in. Uninvited. Providing a platform that preys on the weak and vulnerable. A platform to bring illegal activities into my home. It is not ok. In fact, it is not fair. My loss will always be greater than yours.

I turned 40 the year Jake passed and my friends kept telling me to have a party and that I should celebrate. All the while I was thinking that if I was turning 40 and lived to 85, it would be 45 years I would have to live without Jake. I would have to live with this 'grief'. I did not want to celebrate. I barely remember my life before Jake entered it and the thought of living without him is overwhelming. What I do know is that life without Jake will continue to be anything but ordinary and normal.

Signed:



Signature Witnessed by:

